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PROMOTION OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

HEARING

BEFORE THE

U.S. Congress House

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SIXTY-FIFTH CONGRESS

THIRD SESSION

ON

H. R. 12880

JANUARY 21, 1919



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COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

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BENJAMIN C. HILLIARD, Colorado.
HORATIO C. CLAYPOOL, Ohio.
W. B. BANKHEAD, Alabama.
CHARLES H. BRAND, Georgia.
THOMAS L. BLANTON, Texas.
JEROME F. DONOVAN, New York.
CALEB POWERS, Kentucky.

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EDMUND PLATT, New York.
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FREDERICK W. DALLINGER, Massachusetts.
HARRY H. PRATT, New York.
ALBERT H. VESTAL, Indiana.

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PROMOTION OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION.

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Tuesday, January 21, 1919.

The committee met at 10.50 o'clock a. m., Hon. William B. Bankhead (acting chairman) presiding.

There were also present Representatives Claypool, Donovan, Towner, Dallinger, and Platt.

MR. BANKHEAD. Gentlemen, there are several very important matters that really demand the prompt attention of the committee, if there is any expectation of getting favorable action at this session of Congress. At my request the chairman called this meeting primarily for the purpose of considering House bill 12880, which is identical in form with Senate bill 4449, which has been acted upon by the Senate, and is now on the calendar of the Senate, with one or two minor amendments. Of course, as the author of the House bill, I feel somewhat at a delicacy in taking the initiative in this matter, but I feel sure that all the members of the committee are in thorough sympathy with the purpose of the bill, and I would like very much if the committee could report this bill—if we are going to report this bill, because it is imperative, particularly from the standpoint of the fact that so many of the State legislatures are now in session; I believe 38, aren't there, Dr. Prosser?

DR. PROSSER. Yes; 38.

MR. BANKHEAD. And having a bill requiring such cooperation in order to be effective, it is particularly imperative that we should take prompt action upon it and, if possible, secure its passage before the 4th of March. I presume that you gentlemen are all in favor of the passage of the bill. The hearings, unfortunately, were somewhat delayed in being printed, but are now available, and if you gentlemen haven't copies of the hearings, I believe we can furnish them.

MR. TOWNER. If you haven't plenty of them, I believe I can get them from the Senate committee.

MR. BANKHEAD. I do not think that Mr. McMurtrie is here, but on the subject he testified before the joint hearings, when we had them, and he submitted a brief of his views on the subject.

MR. TOWNER. I just asked him this morning as to whether or not he was going to testify, and he said he would try to have Mr. McMurtrie testify.

MR. BANKHEAD. Mr. McMurtrie is not here; that is the trouble, and if we are going to get anywhere on this proposition—

MR. HAYDEN (interposing). In justification of his absence, he did not receive the telegram until Monday morning; and he was suddenly called away from town on account of the illness of his mother.

Mr. BANKHEAD. It was a specially called meeting of the committee; as soon as we got the chairman to call it I immediately sent the telegram. We would be delighted to have Mr. McMurtrie's further testimony, but if you will read the hearings you will see a rather elaborate statement of his views on the bill which were printed in the hearings. I can not place the page exactly. Do you know whether he would like to be heard in connection with his other statement?

Mr. HAYDEN. Yes; I know fully the position of Mr. McMurtrie. He would like to be heard, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. BANKHEAD. Could you give the committee any idea of the scope of them?

Mr. HAYDEN. I will be very glad to do it, but I have to do that for my own testimony. I know the subjects that Mr. McMurtrie has in mind that he would like to discuss with the committee, and I would not want to have my language used in that connection.

Mr. TOWNER. Let me make a suggestion, Mr. Chairman, that if Mr. McMurtrie could be here to-morrow it might be well to defer the further hearing on this bill until to-morrow. Just let me make a further statement, please. I am going to insist on the committee's taking action on my amendment. I am not seeking to tear down, but I am very well satisfied that we can not get the bill through the House in its present enlarged and unrestricted form, and I desire to present the matter to the full committee, when we can have the committee here. We can not take any action in regard to this bill of any sort until after there is a quorum here. We can have the hearing and discuss and talk about it, but we can not take any action, either to report the bill favorably or unfavorably, or to amend it, and therefore it appears to me that it would be a good idea to defer further hearings on this bill, especially in view of the fact that we have other important matters here; Mr. Prosser and others.

Mr. BANKHEAD. With reference to the suggestion of taking it up to-morrow, I regret that I can not be here to-morrow. I have got to go over to New York this afternoon to take my daughter over there. I could take it up later in the week if it is satisfactory and agreeable to the committee.

Mr. DONOVAN. How many matters are now before the committee unreported, do you know? All that have come before the committee, are any reported?

Mr. BANKHEAD. Here is Senate bill 5348.

Mr. DONOVAN. Then there is the National Conservatory of Music; that is before us.

Mr. BANKHEAD. Then a bill extending the use of special funds for vocational education provided in the soldiers' rehabilitation act.

Mr. TOWNER. The matter that Dr. Prosser desires to present on behalf of the Vocational Education Board is perhaps as important and imperative as there is to be considered by the board, and it has not yet been formulated into any legislative act.

Mr. DONOVAN. Would it not be well, then, to have a sort of field day to clean up the whole thing, and have night sessions, if necessary?

Mr. TOWNER. I think the best thing to do, if you defer the matter, is to get all this evidence, and get it printed and then have an executive session.

Mr. DONOVAN. That is my impression.

Mr. TOWNER. We might discuss it many hours without taking it up for further hearing, and, as you say, clean them up.

Mr. DONOVAN. That would be my notion of it.

Mr. TOWNER. I think that is a good idea.

Mr. DONOVAN. We can have executive sessions at night.

Mr. TOWNER. Did you introduce, Mr. Bankhead, a bill corresponding to Senator Smith's bill for the organization of an educational department?

Mr. BANKHEAD. No, sir; I did not.

Mr. TOWNER. Somebody asked me, and I told them that I thought you did.

Mr. BANKHEAD. No.

Mr. TOWNER. I am sorry that I misinformed them.

Mr. BANKHEAD. As to my position on that bill, Judge Towner, I do not agree with it exactly; and I do not want to assume any. I was not requested to introduce it by the parties who were responsible for it; I do not know that that bill has been introduced in the House. I suggest this in view of Judge Towner's suggestion of his opposition to the general terms of the rehabilitation bill, but we desire to discuss that in executive session.

Mr. DONOVAN. I think it would be well to hear Dr. Prosser on that subject.

Mr. TOWNER. Yes; I should think so. Just before we get through with this other matter I want to put in the record for the consideration of the members of the committee the amendment to this bill which I suggested in the House, and I have said also in these hearings—the general hearings—the reasons why I suggested the amendment. My motion is found on page 75 of the hearings, “to strike out, on page 1, line 4, after the word ‘disabled,’ the words ‘any industry or otherwise,’ and insert the following: ‘while under contract of employment in any industrial pursuit, including agriculture, trade and commerce, manufacturing, mining, transportation, and all the mechanic arts,’” so that this part of the first section will read—commencing with quotation—“In order to provide for the promotion of vocational rehabilitation of all persons disabled while under contract or employment in any industrial pursuit, including agriculture, trade and commerce, manufacture, mining, transportation, and all the mechanical arts,” and so on. That is the amendment that I desire the committee to take action on.

Mr. BANKHEAD. Are you through, Judge?

Mr. TOWNER. Yes.

Mr. BANKHEAD. Now, Mr. Prosser.

Mr. HAYDEN (interposing). Do I understand, then, that you are going to have another hearing on the subject?

Mr. BANKHEAD. That seems to be the sense of the committee. What do you think of that, gentlemen?

Mr. TOWNER. Any time that you suggest.

Mr. BANKHEAD. I will be back from New York later in the week. Suppose we have it on Friday or Saturday of this week.

Dr. PROSSER. Friday is all right for me.

Mr. BANKHEAD. Does that suit you, Mr. Claypool; Friday morning at 10.30?

Mr. TOWNER. I wonder if we could get together at 10. I think probably that it would be better if we can.

Mr. BANKHEAD. Ten o'clock instead of 10.30. Now, we would like to have Dr. Prosser make a statement to the committee in connection with a certain situation that has arisen in connection with the administration of the soldiers' rehabilitation act. It seems to me to require some sort of legislative action.

STATEMENT OF DR. C. A. PROSSER, DIRECTOR FEDERAL VOCATIONAL BOARD.

Dr. PROSSER. Mr. Chairman, primarily I am addressing myself to Senate bill 5038, which was introduced in the House of Representatives on December 17, 1918, and referred to the Committee on Education. This bill, which is to deal primarily with the ways in which the Federal board may expend its gift funds in emergencies for the care of these men, has been before the House Committee on Education now for more than a month and a half, and we are in a very embarrassing situation with regard to it. So much so, that if we do not get action on it before the 1st of March we are not only going to be unable to take care of these soldiers properly, but we will be compelled to farm them out to private agencies.

We will be compelled to farm out to private agencies the job of taking care of these men properly, if it is done at all, instead of doing it through funds either made available out of our appropriation by Congress, or out of appropriations, eight in number, under the vocational rehabilitation act, or through the gift funds which we commonly call fund No. 9.

Now, it is a considerable story I have to tell you. I have got to talk very frankly about a number of circumstances. I don't know what the usual procedure is regarding these matters. If you have not a quorum present this morning I would a good deal rather talk freely without stenographic notes being taken for the purpose of publication, answering any questions you may have to ask and submitting for your meeting on Friday a typewritten summary of what I have to say. I can talk with you a good deal more freely about this situation if I am not being reported verbatim.

Mr. BANKHEAD. With the approval of the committee, Dr. Prosser will be allowed to make an informal statement.

Mr. TOWNER. One difficulty I see regarding that is this: If action is to be finally taken by the committee there is no way—

Mr. DONOVAN. He says he is going to submit a typewritten statement; we can act on that.

Dr. PROSSER. I have got to criticize several other departments of the Government.

Mr. TOWNER. I don't care about preventing the gentleman criticizing the administration if he desires.

Dr. PROSSER. I have no hesitancy in putting in a criticism where it is necessary.

(Thereupon there was informal discussion with the committee by Dr. C. A. Prosser and Mr. J. A. C. Chandler.)

Mr. BANKHEAD. I have two amendments here. The first is on page 1, line 5; strike out the word "is," and insert the following: "together with the items of appropriation contained in section 8 of said act, are." The other amendment is—

Mr. TOWNER. Let us see how that will read: "That the special fund for vocational education authorized by section 7 of the vocational rehabilitation act, approved June 17, 1918, together with the items of appropriation contained in section 8 of said act, are hereby made available," and so on. Now, let us see section 8.

Dr. PROSSER. Section 8 is the appropriation section.

Mr. TOWNER. The section 8, referred to, is the appropriation section in which the fund is apportioned for various purposes. Go ahead.

Dr. PROSSER. On page 2, line 2, after the word "employment," at the end of the line, strike out the period, and insert "and for supplementing any or all of the other items of appropriation made by said act." In other words, the effect would be, gentlemen, to go back to the lump-sum so as to coalesce these funds. We do not ask for an additional cent of money; it does not require an additional dollar appropriated, but it does make these funds in an emergency available, so that the \$795,000 is not tied up, and so that the gift funds may be widened for specific purposes. Let me give an illustration of that, Mr. Chairman: We have an organization of Knights Templar that are ready to put \$100,000 into this fund, to be used for the purpose of providing them with the necessary equipment for the work they are in training for, and to set them up after they are through. A mechanic or a machinist needs about \$50 to buy his tools. They are willing to give it for specific purposes—give it unconditionally, in the present form of the bill. The Elks are ready to make an appropriation of \$56,000, or so much of that as may be necessary, for the purpose of providing physicians at the district offices of the Federal board.

We are now having these examinations made, and we are paying from \$3 to \$5 for the examination of each case. In order to further the work of the War Risk Board, we have gotten men from the Surgeon General's office and from the Public Health Service detailed to our offices on active service without pay, and we pay them so as to avoid delay and expense. We haven't the money without a coalescing fund to do that. There are three different organizations besides the two I have mentioned; there are the Knights of Columbus, who are ready to provide funds and to turn them over to us to be spent exactly as we please; we will determine the conditions and select the people without a single proviso, except that they want to give it for specific purposes rather than for general purposes. We think that it ought to be covered by a special appropriation. No Congress has ever gone far enough into any of these in the past, and I can see very readily why to make a provision to pay a money to set up a man in business after he gets there, is useful.

What is to be done in cases of this kind? Say, a man is to be trained for a barber, and he hasn't the money to go back to his little town and set up a shop; the gift fund, which we are talking about, would enable us to loan him \$100 or \$150 for his shop, and let him have the money on his note for the needs of his business. The purpose of the gift fund, as it is there, is to widen it out.

Mr. DALLINGER. Yes; it is just what is needed in that bill.

Dr. PROSSER. Yes.

Mr. DALLINGER. Can't we get that, Mr. Chairman, for this purpose?

Mr. BANKHEAD. I think probably we could.

Dr. PROSSER. If this is done, we will handle the matter ourselves and be responsible for taking hold of every case under investigation, and see the man through and providing for some proper disposal of his case. We would take every man who came to us and put him in training.

Mr. BANKHEAD. There is a question of a quorum as to acting on it this morning.

Mr. DALLINGER. This matter ought to be attended to immediately, without any delay at all.

Mr. TOWNER. I think the chairman ought to make a special effort to get a quorum here to determine it.

Mr. BANKHEAD. I made a special effort to get one here this morning, Judge Towner. Of course, I will do it again. I will have the secretary write a very urgent letter. Gentlemen, can we rely on an attendance next Friday morning at 10 o'clock?

We will then adjourn until Friday morning at 10 o'clock, January 24, 1918.

(Thereupon, at 11.50 o'clock a. m., the committee adjourned until Friday, January 24, 1919, at 10 o'clock a. m.)

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